

Introduction

There are many issues being faced by businesses in light of the recent coronavirus outbreak, and we recognise that reporting your ABC figure appropriately may not be high up the priority list. However, we've been contacted by a number of people asking how our standards deal with such a situation.

It may be that you're making changes to your publication's circulation or planning contingencies, for example:

- Closure of (or lack of access to) outlets where a publication is sold or displayed for pickup
- Inability to transport copies to outlets
- Non-availability of brand-to-hand distributors
- Reducing print runs and distribution in line with changes in anticipated demand

To help you understand how your circulation and reporting may be affected, we've outlined below how ABC Reporting Standards deal with potential disruptions to the supply chain or changes to your distribution schedules.

1. Excluding issues from the average circulation

Generally you must include all issues of your publication in the ABC average circulation for a particular reporting period. But you may be able to exclude particular issues from your publication's ABC average circulation figure in the following circumstances:

- a. The issue is affected by the occurrence of a public holiday.
- b. Due to reasons outside your control:
 - i. The distribution falls short of that planned.
 - ii. The planned level of distribution is achieved, but is severely delayed, resulting in a shortfall in your claimed circulation.

In relation to distribution difficulties arising due to the effects of the spread of the virus, you would be looking at excluding an issue under point b above.

In most sectors you need to ask and gain our approval to exclude an issue from the average circulation. If an issue is excluded from the average circulation, that issue's individual circulation figure will be reported on the publication's ABC certificate.

The specific criteria for excluding an issue and the levels of distribution shortfall required do vary depending on the ABC sector in which you report. If you would like further information please use the following links:

- [ABC Bulk Distribution](#)
- [Business Magazines](#)
- [Consumer Magazines](#)
- [National Newspapers](#)
- [Regional Publications/ROI Newspapers](#)
- Or call our advice hotline on +44 (1442) 200 770.

How your circulation may be affected

NB: The standards for excluding issues have been developed to primarily address difficulties with physically delivering publications to the locations where they are sold or made available to the consumer, rather than simply lower consumer demand.

2. Monitored Free Distribution / Free Pick Up Copies

Many copies claimed in these categories are reported as regular distribution, which requires quantities to be maintained within certain thresholds from issue to issue (these are detailed in the relevant standards).

If due to the coronavirus situation you plan to vary your distribution beyond these thresholds, for example because of reduced access to distribution locations or reduced consumer footfall, please contact us so we can advise you accordingly.

Should there be special treatment for this new scenario?

The standards relating to excluding issues were developed to deal primarily with short-term or one-off events such as the failure of a printing press or adverse weather affecting road deliveries of publications.

We recognise that the current coronavirus situation is likely to present many different and varied issues for media owners, that some may feel the current standards do not adequately address.

We're monitoring whether the standards should be temporarily varied or revised. However this needs to be done in light of the events that unfold, so that we can review what is appropriate, proportionate and will maintain credible, transparent and comparable data.

We'll then make recommendations to the media owners and buyers that represent the industry on our standard-setting groups. We'll expedite these communications by email or video conference as necessary.

We also have the ability to include notes on certificates, which may be beneficial to alert the reader to significant issues during affected reporting periods.

What advice can you give me now regarding ABC circulation requirements?

We recommend:

1. You make decisions based on the commercial factors facing your publication. *For example we do not expect you to print copies simply because of an ABC requirement, when you have no plan or means of distributing these due to retail/distribution outlets being closed.*
2. You refer to our standards and continue to follow these, including informing us of changes to circulations that require notification.
3. You contact us if you're unsure of how to deal with a particular scenario. We'll do our best to advise you of your options.

For further guidance please email us via info@abc.org.uk or call our advice hotline on +44 (1442) 200 770.